

Subject: Please Expand Orca Critical Habitat

From: "Larry Mayes" <mayes@olympus.net>

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To: "orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov" <orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov>

Dear NOAA,

At the age of 61 I am a life long resident of Washinton State. In 1952 while in the 2nd grade my grandfather took me to the Cedar River in Renton to see the salmon spawning. The number of salmon in the river and on the banks were incredible. The sight of so many salmon and the noise they made scared me. It is not an issue today. I fished in Elliot Bay as a kid and always caught salmon. Not today. Later we had to go out to Blake Island to catch salmon. By highschool we were fishing in Hood Canal and that is when I fell in love with the last remaining pristine fjord in the country. By 1975 we had to go to LaPush, Neah Bay and Westport. Now those great salmon fishing locations are bottom fishing destinations. The salmon are all but gone. Thankfully there are several initiatives underway at the local, county, state and federal level to turn the tide and re establish our salmon runs and restore the economic, and environmental benefits they bring. Unfortunately another critical speceics is facing the salmon experience. The resident orcas are in dire straits and need assistance. While the efforts to protect the orcas are significant and encouraging, just like the early efforts regarding our native salmon populations they are not enough. It is imperative that ALL of Puget Sound be designated as critical habitat, not just portions, to ensure the recovery of the resident orcas. Changes need to be made to the current proposals including the following:

- * Include all nearshore waters
- * Decrease the size of the military exclusion areas and clarify it applies to ALL activities not just the military
- * Noise is a devastaing problem for the orcas and must be defined as such in any protections
- * Hood Canal must be included as part of the orcas critical habitat. It was part of the orca habitat until ithe canal's steady decline in recent years. There are a number of efforts underway to repair and reverse the damage in Hood Canal. When that occurs and the salmon return so will the orcas.
- * The Olympic National Marine Sanctuary as well as other important areas of the Pacific Coast should also be designated as critical habitat.

Thank you for your attention and action regarding these important issues.

Sincerely

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